

THE INTERNATIONAL MODEL FOREST NETWORK



SO MUCH MORE THAN TREES



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CONTEXT

The critical environmental, social, and economic role of forests is well documented. So too is the fact that they are disappearing at an alarming rate. Given this understanding, the notion of a "model forest" likely conjures up images of pristine forests and preserved areas far from the intrusion of people. In reality, however, model forests are about people and how they use and interact with the forest ecosystem and the many resources linked to it, such as soil, water, and wildlife. Many include preserved areas such as parks together with lands used for other production purposes such as agriculture.

Model forests are also about community-based partnerships and about people learning to make decisions together. Local partnerships try to bring together all the players who see value in forests: industries, environmental groups, community associations, indigenous peoples, landowners, and governments. Working together, the partnership develops a common vision of sustainable development and of sustainable forest management.

A model forest is therefore a process in which the community decides how to use the forest and its related resources to best meet its needs. The International Model Forest Network (IMFN) allows local partners to share their knowledge with others. Indeed, networking is an essential part of the model forest picture. IMFN acts as the pipeline that links model forest practitioners with each other, with relevant international bodies, and with policy discussions at the global level.

IMFN currently includes the countries of Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Russia, and the United States. Other countries that are developing model forests and/or

have interest in the network include Argentina, Malaysia, Australia, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and South Africa. The Network is funded by IDRC, CIDA, DFAIT, and the Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada. Together, these partners provide approximately \$1.3 million per year to assist those countries within the Network and support those countries interested in joining the Network.

OBJECTIVES

The IMFN Secretariat fosters cooperation and collaboration in advancing management, conservation, and sustainable development of forest resources through a worldwide network of working model forests. Specifically, the Secretariat

- Encourages international cooperation and exchange of ideas relating to sustainable forestry;
- Supports international cooperation in critical aspects of forest science and social science that underlie the search for new models of forest management; and
- Supports ongoing international discussions on the criteria and principles of sustainable development.

MODEL FORESTS AROUND THE WORLD

- Canada — Fundy Model Forest, Waswanipi Model Forest, Eastern Ontario Model Forest, Manitoba Model Forest, Foothills Model Forest, Long Beach Model Forest, Lake Abitibi Model Forest, Lower St. Lawrence Model Forest, McGregor Model Forest, Prince Albert Model Forest, Western Newfoundland Model Forest

- Mexico — Calakmul Model Forest, Chihuahua Model Forest, Monarch Butterfly Model Forest

- Russia — Gassinski Model Forest

- United States — Cispus Model Forest, Applegate Model Forest, Hayfork Model Forest

- Chile — Chiloé Model Forest

- Japan — Kochi Model Forest, Hokkaido Model Forest



Natural resources are often a source of conflict. The International Model Forest Network brings together forest users of all stripes to form partnerships and develop a sustainable resource-management plan that all parties can support. In Mexico, model forests have become a dynamic force for community development that is wholly endorsed by the central government. Each model forest responds to the particular needs of the communities living within its boundaries. To ensure that the lessons learned in Mexico are shared, networking on a local, regional, and international scale is a priority.

"The model forest concept is simple in theory but complex in its application," says Fred Johnson, the Executive Director of IMFN. "Each player in the model forest partnership uses the forest and its related resources in a variety of ways. Each comes to the table with expectations and demands on the forest ecosystem that are driven by social, economic, and environmental viewpoints that are often in conflict. The challenge is therefore to bring balance into these competing demands and to understand the consequences and trade-offs of actions and activities so that informed decisions can be made."

The challenge is there in every model forest, for each is unique. The partnership and the activities within each model forest must reflect the differences in the social, cultural, economic, and political setting of each model forest area.

Although they are structured and operate within their particular context, each model forest has the common attribute of a partnership with the desire to share experiences and information through networking. Each model forest also covers a range of activities, including research, education, and economic diversification.

Model forests in Mexico are an excellent example of the diversity and range of activities that can occur within different locales. Like all model forests, they are large-scale experiments that cover a land base of significant size, such as a watershed. The Chihuahua and Calakmul model forests were created in 1993. A third, the Monarch Butterfly Model Forest, was added in 1997. Each present a different story of how people can work together to recognize and enhance the economic, social, and environmental values of the forest.

Calakmul Model Forest, Campeche State, Mexico

Education is of particular importance to the wise management of the Calakmul Model Forest. Of the 16 000 or so people living in the model forest area, half are under the age of 15 years. The young and women, two of the most marginalized groups in the region, are the targets of education efforts.

Environmental education programs are a means to integrate local populations in plans to manage sustainably the region's resources. They are the key to shifting attitudes and behaviours toward the use of the natural resource base. A wide range of tools are used, including

- Workshops and training courses (for women's groups, school teachers, children, students, and others);
- Community meetings to exchange information and experiences on the use of tropical forest plants and wild game as food sources; and
- Video presentations to attract attention and lead public discussion on key environmental issues such as the importance of forests in terms of the food chain and its ecology, fauna, flora, and importance to a family's needs and values.



MODEL FOREST PROGRAMS EXPAND THE LIVELIHOOD
OPTIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE AND REDUCE THE CONFLICT
OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH COMPETING RESOURCE USES.

Chihuahua Model Forest, Chihuahua State, Mexico

In any model forest, knowledge about the state of the local resources is essential for making informed management decisions. Without reliable, up-to-date information, decisions on how to exploit or conserve natural resources will occur within a vacuum, and the positive or negative results of the management decisions cannot be accurately assessed. Research into the development of tools, such as resource inventories, to provide base information is critical if the partners are to develop and elect the strategies that best meet their social, environmental, and economic objectives.

For the Chihuahua Model Forest, research has helped develop a geographic information system (GIS) that maps and analyzes the 110 100-hectare model forest. This computerized tool allows partners to examine different management and development scenarios that take into account social, economic, and environmental dimensions and impacts.

The program will develop a series of thematic maps on climatic data, infrastructure and roads, human settlements, tourism activities, soil and vegetation, forest productivity, wildlife and habitat, and specific tree species distribution, all within a single database. Partners can easily see the possible effects of their proposed decisions.

Monarch Butterfly Model Forest, Mexico and Michoacan states, Mexico

Model forests play an important role in addressing local needs such as food security and alternative economic development. Traditionally, forests have been managed mostly for timber or cut to clear land for farming. Economic diversification addresses the potential benefits of other uses for the model forest.

The Monarch Butterfly Model Forest has embarked on an economic diversification program to reduce the pressure its 900 000 inhabitants exercise on the land and its resources. This program is designed to provide alternative income-generating options, such as tourism, to the local communities.

From October to March every year, millions of monarch butterflies find refuge in the forested mountains of the states of Michoacan and Mexico. Thanks to this spectacular migration, and other attractions in the region, tourism has become increasingly important for many of the 22 municipalities that lie within the model forest. The local partnership will mobilize communities, other organizations, and institutions to improve tourism facilities and overall forest management, thereby generating additional income for the local people while preserving the habitat of the monarch butterfly.

Resources

- Working website: <http://www.idrc.ca/imfn/index.html>
- IMFN Annual Report, 1996-1997:
http://www.idrc.ca/imfn/ar9697_e/index.html
- Model Forest Media Kit:
http://www.idrc.ca/media/for-index_e.html
- Reports webzine, "Protecting Mexico's Tropical Forests: The Calakmul Model Forest Program":
<http://www.idrc.ca/books/reports/1996/23-01e.html>
- Leads 9(2), "A Forest Grows in Chile: An Island in Chile is Home to the Newest Model Forest":
<http://www.idrc.ca/media/Lds-9-2.html#Forest>
- John G. Bene Fellowship in Social Forestry Research (focus: Jean-Philippe Linteau):
<http://www.idrc.ca/awards/elint.html>

Future Directions

The creation of the Monarch Butterfly Model Forest is an important step toward developing a Mexican model forest network and a national strategy to implement sustainable management policies at the local level. Given that 80% of the forested lands in Mexico are community owned, this local component is vital to any future plans to develop the country's forest resources sustainably.

In late 1997, the Canadian partners supporting IMFN assessed that their experience with the Network had been very positive, both in Canada and internationally. They indicated to members of the Network and to other interested countries that they would continue their support for IMFN and its secretariat to March 2000. They stated, however, that Canada was looking for partners to collectively chart the future of IMFN and define a process to truly internationalize it. In an informal meeting held during the World Forestry Congress in Antalya, Turkey, agreement was reached amongst 12 countries on a process to achieve this goal. Negotiations are now underway.

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